

Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System  
**POLICY COMMITTEE**  
State of Alaska, DOT&PF, Main Conference Room  
2301 Peger Road Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Meeting Minutes – September 16, 2009

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Steve Titus called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

**2. Introduction of Members and Attendees**

The following were present:

- \* FMATS Policy Committee members
- \*\* FMATS Staff members
- \*\*\* FMATS Technical Committee members

Name	Representing
* Steve Titus, P.E.	DOT&PF
* Mayor Terry Strle	City of Fairbanks
* Mayor Jim Whitaker	Fairbanks North Star Borough
* Mayor Doug Isaacson	City of North Pole
* Luke Hopkins	Fairbanks North Star Borough
* Chad Roberts	Fairbanks City Council Rep.
* Alice Edwards	ADEC Acting Director, Air Quality Division
*** Donna Gardino	FMATS Coordinator
*** Bob Pristash	City of Fairbanks
*** Ethan Birkholz	DOT&PF, Planning Manager
*** Joan Hardesty	ADEC
*** Mike Schmetzer	City of Fairbanks
*** Bernardo Hernandez	Fairbanks North Star Borough
** Margaret Carpenter	DOT&PF, Transportation Planner
** Tara Callear	FMATS, Planner
** Todd Boyce	FNSB
David van den Berg	Downtown Association
Dave Bloom	DOT&PF
Jerry Rafson	DOT&PF
Guy Sattley	Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly
John Jackovich	Fairbanks Business Owner, Big I
Jerry Colp	City of Fairbanks
Meadow Bailey	DOT&PF
Amy Geiger	Downtown Association of Fairbanks
David Leone	FNSB
Dan Bross	KUAC

**3. Public Comments**

Mr. John Jackovich said that there is good harmony between him and the demolition contractors, Nuprecon. His patrons are being made aware of what is going on. He is very impressed with the company's professionalism. They have been cautious and courteous.

**4. Approval of the September 16, 2009 Agenda**

- **MOTION:** To approve the September 16, 2009 Agenda, as amended. (Strle/Edwards)  
No opposition. Approved.

**COMMENTS:** Mayor Jim Whitaker asked to add to the agenda under Other Issues the item Peger Road Railroad Property Access. Ms. Alice Edwards requested the addition of the Air Quality Control Plan- SIP as an Informational Item.

Mayor Doug Isaacson joined the meeting 10:04.

**5. Approval of August 19, 2009 minutes**

- **MOTION:** To approve the August 19, 2009 minutes. (Strle/Hopkins). No opposition. Approved.

**COMMENTS:**  
NONE

**6. Committee Reports**

**a) FMATS Coordinator / Technical Committee Action Items**

Ms. Donna Gardino pointed out the highlights from the Coordinator's report as presented in the meeting materials.

**b) Seasonal Mobility Task Force**

Ms. Gardino referenced the Strategy Matrix included in the packet and emphasized the importance of improved access to the transit system. The Task Force has the long term goal of seeing through the development of a Pedestrian Plan. The map illustrating the agency responsibilities will be distributed to those that would find it useful once the final refinements are made.

**7. Old Business**

**a) FFY09 Obligation Status Report Update**

Ms. Gardino reported that 100% of the FMATS projects for FFY09 were obligated.

**8. New Business**

**a) CMAQ Funding**

Ms. Gardino referenced the spreadsheet in the meeting materials. It explains a proposed funding allocation structure developed by DOT&PF headquarters. The draft STIP does not show a CMAQ funding allocation for FMATS, and FMATS has made a STIP comment to point this out. The spreadsheet shows the funding breakdown between Fairbanks and Juneau, but there is a good chance that Juneau will not be designated a non-attainment area, so it is subject to change. This would leave \$5.5 million for Fairbanks. This funding would then need to be divided between the MPO and that non-attainment area that falls outside MPO. The MPO is smaller in area (42%) but has a larger population (85%) than the non-attainment area outside the MPO. It will have to be decided where the money is best focused in order to address the PM<sub>2.5</sub> problem. Ms. Gardino is of the opinion that it should be based on population density.

Mr. Titus asked if this requires an endorsement by this Committee. Ms Gardino said that the Committee will be asked to approve the STIP comments and this is mentioned in those comments.

Mayor Whitaker asked Ms. Edwards if the sub-allocation would still apply to the borough. She said it will depend how the agreement is written on the transportation side.

Ms. Gardino clarified that this agreement has to be in place and will determine how conformity analysis' and mitigation measures are handled for projects that are in the non-attainment area that are not in the MPO.

Mr. Hopkins asked about the draft of the MOU.

Ms. Edwards clarified that there are 2 agreements. The first is the air quality MOU at the local level which will determine the roles and responsibilities of DEC and the FNSB on the issues of planning. The other is as Ms. Gardino just explained.

Mr. Titus said that there is a likelihood that there would be no CMAQ money programmed in the current 2010-2013 TIP. It would be an amendment in the future.

Ms. Gardino confirmed this and said that FMATS has been told that they will not lose the money. It will be held until the agreements are in place. One of the comments states that the FMATS would like the opportunity to review a draft agreement and that a work session is requested.

**b) FFY 2010 – 2013 STIP Comments**

Ms. Gardino referenced the STIP comments in the meeting materials and clarified comment #1. FMATS' CMAQ allocation has been omitted from the draft STIP. FMATS requests the \$2 million allocation be restored in the approved STIP for PM<sub>2.5</sub> data collection and analysis. Although the carbon monoxide measures have been completed, there are contingency projects to be completed. Over half of the current normal allocation is for work on Contingency Measure 20878, identified in the State adopted SIP dated April 2008, addressing PM<sub>2.5</sub> reductions. The EPA will take action towards approving the April 2008 SIP and the comment period for proposed action is open now and will end October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

Ms. Edwards said that since EPA is just now acting on the April 2008 SIP, that it is important to be clear what is being referenced in this comment because the last EPA approved SIP is several years older (2004) than the one that is currently approved with DEC (2008).

Ms. Gardino said that comments 2 and 3 had been discussed earlier. Comment 4 addresses the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Widening project and points out that it is not funded in the STIP. This project is in the right-of-way phase and is a congested intersection. This project should not be slowed down. Comment 5 is in reference to the South Cushman Improvements which is a time trap, and that the design and right-of-way phases should be funded within the 2010 – 2013 timeframe.

Ms. Gardino explained comment 6 which discusses the grandfathering allocation discrepancy. The amount shown in the STIP does not match the actual remaining total.

- **MOTION:** To approve the FFY 2010 - 2013 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program Comments to the DOT & PF Headquarters as discussed. (Isaacson/Hopkins). None Opposed. Approved.

**COMMENTS:**

Mr. Titus asked if comment 1 will need to be modified. Ms. Gardino said she will amend it as recommended by Ms. Edwards.

Mr. Roberts asked for clarification on a time trap. Ms. Gardino explained that federally funded projects require proof of progress in its development. It must go to construction

within 10 years, or if there is a ROW phase, it must go to construction in 20 years. When this timing becomes an issue it is considered a time trap. In this case, the inclusion of the roundabout was the cause for delay and an extension was requested.

Mr. Titus added that if that timeframe is exceeded the money must be repaid to FHWA.

Mr. Hopkins asked about the extension and asked if a timeframe was established. Mr. Dave Bloom said it was confirmed through an informal conversation with FHWA Regional Director, David Miller. He said he has not gotten it in writing yet.

Mayor Whitaker asked about comment 6, and if it was about the Illinois Street Reconstruction grandfathered funding and asked what the issue is. Mr. Titus said it was just a difference in amounts.

Mayor Isaacson asked about Moose Creek Overpass. Stating that there is concern about whether or not this project is warranted if the railroad realignment were to occur. Mr. Rafson said that the project will continue because regardless of whether or not it is a high traffic area for trains, it will remain a high traffic area for vehicles. It is not a high priority for the railroad.

Mayor Isaacson asked why not add a bypass lane and use the money somewhere that it is needed. A lot of people are questioning the value of this project.

Mr. Titus said that this is one of the projects that, at one time was proposed for a grade separation project, and they are now trying to eliminate the grade separation. Mr. Rafson said it was part of a program to eliminate railroad grade separations along all NHS routes.

Mayor Isaacson asked if such a project wouldn't make more sense at Mile 3 on the Richardson where traffic is dense. Mr. Rafson said that the project is not in the STIP right now. Mayor Isaacson said it is on page 41. Ms. Gardino said it is listed as Illustrative.

Mr. Titus asked if Mayor Isaacson is proposing that FMATS add an additional STIP comment. Mayor Isaacson said he would entertain the thoughts of the committee.

Mayor Strle asked if this is a discussion of a motion on the floor. Mr. Titus said that if an additional comment is to be made, then the motion will need to be amended.

Mayor Isaacson said he would like to make a motion but would like the Committee's input.

- **AMMEDED MOTION:** To approve the FFY 2010 - 2013 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program Comments to the DOT & PF Headquarters as discussed, with the added comment to recommend a bypass lane, in lieu of an overpass, and to request that money be used on higher priority projects in the MPO. (Isaacson/Hopkins) Motion rescinded.

**COMMENTS:**

Mr. Hopkins recommended removing the part about the funding.

Mayor Isaacson said he does not want to lose the design money that has already been spent on this for design. He does not want to lose that money.

Mr. Hopkins said if the comment was accepted, the design project might be altered and therefore the design funding and spending would continue on that project. They may need more money.

Mr. Titus said it has been programmed in prior STIPs and it has been funded with federal funding to do the design work. Mr. Bloom said the design is nearly complete. Mr. Titus said that this motion would change the design to not have an overpass, but rather a bypass lane. Mayor Isaacson said only if it was agreed by the Policy Committee that this should be the case, otherwise he would remove his motion.

Mr. Titus said as an Illustrative project, there is no money. Mayor Isaacson said however that it is in there in hopes of being funded which is why he is having this discussion.

Ms. Gardino said it would be appropriate to make a comment on this project in this letter because it is a STIP project.

Mayor Isaacson said he wants to get a sense from the railroad as well.

Ms. Gardino said the project has been funded up to this point with FHWA funds.

Ms. Edwards said she is confused because the illustrative project would be there in hopes of funding to construct what has been designed. She said if an overpass has been designed and if an overpass is not what is warranted, then it should be recommended that the project either be removed from the STIP or the design be changed.

Mayor Whitaker said that his concern is that it may be better to first look at which alternative would be most appropriate before making a recommendation to remove the overpass from the STIP.

Mr. Titus asked that the Technical Committee bring back a recommendation.

Ms. Gardino said that it is a STIP project, so ultimately the DOT is going to make the decision as to whether or not to do an overpass. The FMATS Policy Committee can weigh in if they want.

Mayor Whitaker pointed out that the Policy Committee comment would therefore be an opinion. Ms. Gardino said that the Committee could include this opinion in the letter.

Mayor Isaacson asked that the amended motion be removed and that the Technical Committee be asked to look at this overpass.

**c) FNSB FY 2010 – 2012 Coordinated Transportation Plan**

Mr. Glenn Miller gave a brief overview of the plan which was included in the packet. Also included in the packet was the resolution. He said this document is required for eligibility for a variety of transportation funds. Mr. David Leone explained the prioritization of the projects, the groups involved in the process and the involvement of the public. He explained that some of the projects have been approved for funding already.

- **MOTION:** To approve the resolution of support for the Fairbanks North Star Borough FY 2010 – 2013 Coordinated Transportation Plan. (Strle/Hopkins). None opposed.  
Approved.

**COMMENTS:**

Mayor Isaacson pointed out a discussion from the FNSB Assembly about a public testimony requesting transportation options from Salcha. He asked if this would address such things. Mr. Leone said that project #8 would provide such community support.

Mr. Hopkins asked about possible funding sources for such projects. Mr. Leone said there are two opportunities for grants. One is for seniors and disabled in low income populations. These are in the \$50K range. The other is more rural focused and the funding level is upwards of \$250K.

Mayor Strle complimented this effort.

**9. Public Comments**

Mr. David van den Berg commented about a conference he attended for Downtown Associations. He said a focus was on how infrastructure is critical for economic development outcomes. The infrastructure should be productive, not just intended to move people. There are many secondary benefits and the Vision Fairbanks is dependent on these secondary benefits for the downtown revitalization. He commented on last Policy Committee meeting that discussed downtown traffic patterns, noting that the downtown is the only place in the community that has one way streets. He said he was disappointed that the efforts at the past meetings to bring 2-way traffic to downtown ended with a fizzle. He asked that, despite the decisions of the last meeting, this Committee continue to assist in efforts to revitalize the downtown through infrastructure improvements. He said he is concerned that under the current direction that 2-way traffic is no longer going to work. He said that if it does not work, he asks that the funds that were dedicated to this project remain in the downtown for other infrastructure related projects.

Ms. Amy Geiger commented on the Technical and Policy Committee meetings from last month. She said she was dismayed by the fact that it was recommended by the Technical Committee that the Policy Committee vote to look at a roundabout in the EA. She said that recommendation was not addressed by the Policy Committee. She said advisory committees give good advice to policy making bodies and that the policy committee should listen and respond. She said she was also very concerned that, after doing research on roundabouts, that there were not more facts presented on roundabouts and their benefits. She said the facts were readily available on the internet, for example emission reductions, increased pedestrian safety and accident fatality reduction. This is just the tip of the iceberg as there are many studies out there to confirm this. She said that she understands the project in question has a history and has a design, but why not consider something that may be a better design.

**10. Other Issues**

**a) Final Kinney Report**

Mayor Strle brought it the Committee's attention that at the August 19<sup>th</sup> FMATS meeting, this Committee took action on a report that had not even been seen. The report came out on August 18<sup>th</sup>. She said she is not sure if the maker of the motion had seen this report or not but it had not been shared with the Committee. It says in the report that this had not been evaluated before this point. She said that where she comes from and where she works, public process is important and this is bad public process when action is taken on something that has not been seen. She said that the City Engineering Department did not see or review this. It is horrible policy that this group took action on something that had not been reviewed by the FMATS, FNSB or COF staff responsible for reviewing such a report. She said it was clear to her that the chair of this committee had seen the report.

Mr. Titus said that at the meeting prior to last meeting that Mr. Kinney presented at that meeting. It is not new data, it was only new that he had written it down. He said it is in the minutes.

**b) Cushman Intersection Presentation and Discussion**

Mayor Strle said it is bad process when the only thing that DOT presents to businesses and the public one idea for a roundabout. Clearly there could have been other drawings. Mr. Bloom said that the one presented was just preliminary and there could be other alternatives. But the only thing taken forward by DOT was the one.

Mayor Whitaker said that this has been a multi-year process. At the Chair's suggestion, which he said he feels was appropriate, the Committee looked at the feasibility of a roundabout. He said it was a very fair and open process that had been going on for years. He said it was not a fair or accurate depiction of the situation to say it was the only time it was considered. He said the decision made by the Policy Committee at the last meeting was predicated by concerns for time and cost. He said that the 2-way traffic recommendation remains. It is a question of level of service. He thinks a good decision was made and he is not interested in revisiting it. He said a roundabout is probably a good idea in the future. He wants to see the Illinois Street Reconstruction project move forward.

Mr. Hopkins said it was a powerful statement to present 2 map options to the businesses, such as the News Miner when other options are known to exist. This image gets set in people's mind. He said the businesses were not fully informed. He said these public comments from the businesses that were not fully informed weighed heavily in the making of the final decision.

Mayor Isaacson said he does not want to be on the record for having done something that is bad public policy. He said this is an ongoing discussion and the roundabout was a later addition to the discussion. This is a multi decade type project and it should not be derailed. He said the public has had an opportunity to comment and the public process was served.

**c) Peger Road Railroad Property Access**

Mayor Whitaker said that the Railroad owns the property where Ice Alaska is now located. Ice Alaska has requested access to that property. He said that he understands that there has been a disagreement between regarding safety concerns between the DOT and the AKRR. He understands those issues, however there is a concern with Ice Alaska maintaining its economic viability. The AKRR must get fair market value for the property it leases, even to a non-profit such as Ice Alaska. His concern from a community perspective is that Ice Alaska anchors winter activities and is a large economic component. He said it is a concern that this could result in Ice Alaska going away. He said it is incumbent upon this group to look out for the interests of this group, specifically their access concerns. Improved access, which the AKRR is willing to pay for, would allow for more efficient operations. His request is that at the next meeting there be a discussion and action on this.

Mayor Whitaker asked if Peger Road was in FMATS. Mr. Titus said it is a DOT owned facility within the MPO. He said that DOT has answered this question several times and would be prepared to make a presentation to the Committee. Ms. Gardino said if it were a project, it would be a TIP project and DOT would design it. She understands the DOT concern to be that the access would not be a safe access and would not meet standard. She said the Technical Committee could look at it and make a recommendation.

Mr. Roberts asked about Ice Alaska and their high overhead. The access may or may not be granted off of Peger Road. Is the AKRR saying that if it were granted that they would lower the rent? Mayor Whitaker said he cannot speak for the railroad. He said it could affect the present value of the future lease. This information is needed for grant purposes.

Mr. Hopkins asked if the DOT could bring forward alternative solutions rather than just presenting what has been determined as an unsafe alternative. He asked if the Design team could look at other options and present them. Mr. Titus agreed to this.

Mayor Strle asked about DOT's past comments. Mr. Titus said that DOT has been asked by the property owner and Ice Alaska to put a driveway somewhere between the bridge and the right turn onto Phillips Field Road. This was denied. Mr. Bloom said that the traffic volumes and accidents have been looked at. That section of Peger Road is access controlled which means no access. He said other options have been considered. Peger Road carries a large number of cars and many travel and queue up in the outside lane and a turn lane would create the potential for accidents.

Mr. Hopkins asked Mr. Bloom if it were a right-in, right-out. He said yes and that left turn pockets were also considered. Various scenarios were looked at.

#### **11. Informational Items**

##### **a) Safe Routes To School Grant Application**

Ms. Gardino said that the project agreement is in the packet and has been submitted.

##### **b) Alternatives Charrette Rescheduled to October 22, 2009**

This is for the Long Range Transportation Plan.

##### **c) Air Quality Control Plan- SIP**

Ms. Edwards said that the EPA published in the federal register yesterday their intention to approve the last version of the SIP for Fairbanks which has the suspension of the IM program, assigning it a contingency measure status. The comment period closes on October 15 to comment on this action. There were three programs being approved at this time.

#### **12. Adjourn**

**Motion to Adjourn.** (Roberts/Hopkins). Adjourned at 11:32 p.m.

**Next Scheduled Policy Committee Meeting, 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, October 21, 2009 at DOT&PF Main Conference Room**

Approved:

  
Steve Titus, F.E., Chair  
FMATS Policy Committee

Date:

10/21/09